Castlemaine Naturalist

August 2011

Vol. 36.7 #390

Monthly newsletter of the Castlemaine Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Bracket fungi, Tarilta Gorge Photo - Noel Young

Walmer South Reserve Field Trip

(Testing out the survey sheet for Small Reserves - and having a wonderful afternoon into the bargain.)

Rita Mills

Though the afternoon was sunny, the wind was cold, but it didn't deter a good number from venturing out to Walmer South. Some of us had been to this reserve in the past, and surveys have been done there. The last one I attended was about 2006. It was dry, plants were dying and I don't remember there being many birds around. This time it felt like we'd gone to the wrong spot. I made a list of plants in flower - not many of course, and those not in flower, noting whether they were few, abundant or in between. I almost gave up the effort in the end, as we found masses of Gold-dust Wattle *Acacia acinacea* and Chocolate Lily leaves. Mosses and lichens were covering much of the ground, dotted here and there by various fungi, and Spreading Wattle *A. genistifolia*, with its pale yellow balls, was almost everywhere we walked. Interestingly enough, there were very few Golden Wattles *A. pycnantha*, none in flower, and only one Fairy, or Bendigo, Waxflower was seen.

The reserve is very long and narrow, running approximately east/west, and is approached through private property. The area is mainly fairly flat, but there is a shallow gully. The main eucalypts seemed to be Yellow Gum and Red Stringybark, with some Red Box in the eastern section, and a few Grey Box throughout. There was one old Yellow Gum near the northern fence towards the eastern end of the reserve. One big limb had died, and has hollows, one taken over by feral bees. The rest of the trunk is topped by a few old branches, and the Galahs have stripped away lots of bark, so the poor old tree, though picturesque, looks like it might be on its way out.

Another big old tree was a Grey Box in the north-east corner. One branch which goes out at right angles has apparently suffered insect damage in the past, and has a huge diameter, and looks quite odd, giving the tree more of the silhouette of a Long-leaf Box, rather than Grey Box. Not far from there is a group of Bulokes

Allocasuarina luehmannii, identified by the growth, the branchlets with their many small "teeth" and the bark, as there were no cones or flowers that we could find on the day.

Most of the birds seen were on the eastern end of the reserve, too, and the biggest thrill for most of us were four male Flame Robins and at least 2 females. We also found a Scarlet Robin, Crimson Rosellas, Fuscous Honeyeaters, Long-billed Corellas in the paddock close by, Grey Fantail, Galahs, Pied Currawongs, White-eared Honeyeater and Buff-rumped Thornbills. There could be Quail in the reserve, too, as there were some "platelets " found. Also there were recent signs of Echidnas and Wallabies, and an Eastern Grey Kangaroo and her half grown joey hopped through the bush while we were there.

Plants in flower were: Spreading Wattle, Cherry Ballart (*Exocarpus cupressiformis*), though you need a hand lens to see the the minute pale yellow flowers, Honeypots *Acrotriche serrulata*, and Tall Greenhoods *Pterostylis melagramma*. There were lots of orchid leaves as well as leaves of lilies, Yam Daisies *Microseris sp3*, Billy Buttons *Craspedia variabilis* - all sorts! Several plants had just one or two flowers, such as the Tall Riceflower *Pimelea linifolia*, Pink Bell *Tetratheca ciliata*, Sticky Everlasting *Xerochrysum viscosum*, and Gorse Bitter Pea *Daviesia ulicifolia*, which, unlike those in the Kaweka Sanctuary in Castlemaine, are thriving. There were several plants that we need to see in flower to identify, so the reserve would be well worth another visit later on, and we discussed over a late afternoon tea whether we ought to make that visit during the Wednesday Wildflower Walks.
I think we all agreed that it would be a very good idea.

Photos - Noel Young

The Flat Peas

Ern Perkins

The recent issue of Muelleria, published by the National Herbarium in Melbourne, included a revision of the flat-peas. There are now thought to be three different kinds of flat-pea growing in the Malmsbury - Taradale district. Formerly all were known as Handsome Flat-pea, *Platylobium formosum.* The common name came from the scientific name: *platylobium* = flat pods, and *formosum* = beautiful, handsome.

The three flat-peas growing near Malmsbury are

Platylobium montanum* ssp *montanum. A small, erect shrub with large, heart-shaped leaves. The leaves are very shortly stalked (to appear stalkless) and in opposite pairs. It usually grows close to the dividing range, hence *montanum.* This flat-pea also grows in the Maldon forest and near The Monk.

Platylobium montanum* ssp *prostratum is a prostrate plant which may cover many square metres. The leaves have pointed tips and are stalked. Some leaves grow in opposite pairs and some grow singly, but there are always some leaves in opposite pairs. The name *prostratum* refers to its growth habit.

Platylobium rotundum is also prostrate, and may cover many square metres. The leaves are almost round (hence *rotundum*) and have long leaf stalks.

Platylobium formosum is now considered to be restricted to coastal N.S.W. and Queensland.

Unlike scientific names, there are no formal rules for common names. We could continue to use Handsome Flat-pea, or use new names, or use only the scientific names. Suggestions are Hill Flat-pea, Prostrate Flat-pea, and Round-leaf Flat-pea.

Platylobium montanum* ssp *montanum

Platylobium rotundum

Bells Swamp Revisited

Rita Mills

The afternoon of Saturday July 16 was fine and mostly sunny with a very fresh wind when Doug and I decided to go out to Bells Swamp to see how things are going out there. We found that the water has mostly left the road, the road to Baringhup is open, but has a rather sloppy start, but the other two roads are closed to non existant, and the road to Bridgewater is still closed, with barriers - both plastic and dirt hummocks. The plastic has been bypassed by 4x4s and they've driven over the hummocks, and someone has cut through the red gum, which had been a formidable barrier. The road wasn't as knocked about as I had expected - for the couple of hundred metres or so that I'd walked, anyway.

The birds were there in force, but not a huge number of species, though the calls were loud and pretty constant - White-plumed Honeyeaters, Galahs, Corellas (both?) and Moorhens, seemed to be the most vocal. I missed the little Black-fronted Dotterel, and the Sacred Kingfisher, but there must have been about 50 Mudlarks, lots of Willie Wagtails, I don't know how many White-plumed Honeyeaters, and quite a number of Grey Teal and Little Grebes. Most of the birds seemed to be more confident that usual, and it was quite a novelty seeing the Grebes and the Teal at such close quarters. It seemed to me that it must have been very quiet around the swamp despite there being a bit of feral traffic such as ourselves and the 4x4s. Other birds seen were the family of Superb Blue Fairy-wrens, Brown Treecreepers, Pacific Black Duck, Dusky Moorhens, Black-tailed Native Hens (2), Little Ravens, and a few Magpies. I didn't see the Purple Swamphens, or any herons, but we were really there at the wrong time of day for be best birding, and I didn't walk very far either, but I enjoyed my 40 minutes there.

Celebrating 1000 Covenants 10/7/11

Geraldine Harris

On Sunday we travelled to The Clarkesdale Bird Sanctuary at Linton to celebrate the Trust for Nature's achievement of reaching 1000 covenants since 1987.

We learned that, in total, 45,378 hectares of land are now protected under 1069 covenants and Chris Lindorf, the Regional Manager for Corangamite, gave a short address and showed a map of all the covenanted properties scattered over the state protecting habitat for Victorian native plants and wildlife. We were also shown some footage of film taken on a Trust for Nature property in Gembrook by Ed McNabb using infra-red cameras that are playing such an important part in detecting native wildlife on T f N properties.

After lunch a couple of property owners talked about their particular covenants. The first speaker was from the Mt Bute area and he told how he remembered walking through paddocks in thongs as a young man cursing all the prickly Blue Devils, Spiny Rice Flower etc. Years later, with some realization that such vegetation was rapidly disappearing, he purchased some of that same land, which had since been heavily grazed for many years, to see if it could be restored to its former glory.

He began with very little knowledge and learned much along the way. He recognised that some remnant vegetation still remained along roadsides and

wondered if he could restore these plants to his land. He fenced out the stock to give any remnant plants a chance to survive and now stakes each new Spiny Riceflower he finds. Sheep are brought into the area at the end of February for 4-6 weeks to keep any competing vegetation in check. Seed collected from his plants is used to propagate new plants, which he buys back and plants. He was disappointed recently when an unusual plant turned out to be the exotic South African Orchid, which is a weed, but he has carefully removed them all and knows to keep a vigilant watch out for further plants. And gradually the prickly plants that annoyed him so long ago are returning....

The second speaker was a lady from Meredith who returned from 10 years working in Norway in the early 80's to settle on a denuded piece of land surrounded by forest. She sought advice and drew up a management plan and set to work. We were told how she made all her tree guards from metal sheets left over from bottle top manufacturing and old wire bent into frames. The ground was so hard she had to dig the holes with crowbars and mallets and after two days she had only planted 360 of the 1000 plants she had intended to plant the first day. We learned how one of her first tasks was to inform about 70 local shooters that the land was no longer there for their use!

Overhead photos of the area then and now and also of the little native animals she has cared for along the way were testament to the wonderful work done on this covenant. Barbara's main message was that environmental restoration takes time. She recommends putting guards around self established plants and says, "Don't try to play God. Don't plant everything. Wait and see what comes."

Unfortunately, by this time the rain had set in and we decided to forgo the walk through the reserve that was set up by Gordon Clarke, a man who spent many years buying and re-vegetating this area as a sanctuary for birds. But that's another story. ....

Quadrat Count, June 2011

Denis Hurley

On 30th June 2011 in the company of Lesley and Ern Perkins and Richard Piesse, a plant survey was conducted on similar sloping ground each side of Green Gully track, south of the Vaughan – Glenluce area. This is in an area proposed for a fuel reduction burn later this year.

Ern and Lesley along with privileged friends can assist in the sometimes laborious task of spotting/ counting a diverse range of plants over several hours in a carefully set up area. These documented areas are of great importance in recording before and after affects of man's intrusion. I personally have learned more in many of these activities under the eagle eyes of Ern and Lesley and Richard than one can learn from reading books.

Plants seen flowering this day on Green Gully Track / Up and Down Track:

Rough Wattle	*Acacia aspera ssp. aspera*
Spreading Wattle	*A. genistifolia*
Woolly Wattle	*A. lanigera var whanii*
Common Correa	*Correa reflexa var reflexa*
Downy Grevillea	*Grevillea alpina*
Bushy Hakea	*Hakea decurrens ssp physocarpa*

Common Beard Heath	*Leucopogon virgatus*
Bent Goodenia	*Goodenia geniculata*
Ploughshare Wattle	*Acacia gunnii*
Smooth Parrot Pea	*Dillwynia glaberrina*
Thin-leaf Wattle	*Acacia aculeatissima*
Dagger Wattle	*Acacia siculiformis*
Common Woodrush	*Luzula meridionalis*
Common Heath	*Epacris impressa*

Some very colourful fungi were also noted, including Yellow Button *Omphalina chromacea,* and Rooting Shark *Xerula radicata.*

Upcoming Connecting Country Evening Talks

Over the next few weeks, Connecting Country are hosting two evening talks as part of their Education and Community Engagement Program for 2011. Both talks are free and will be held at the Campbells Creek Community Centre, Elizabeth Street, Campbells Creek. A free supper, made entirely from locally sourced produce, will be served from 6:30pm and the talks will be from 7pm to 9pm.

On the 25th August, **Arn Tolsma**, Senior Scientist in Community Ecology at the Arthur Rylah Institute, will present the first talk on the role of fire in the Box-Ironbark Forests and Woodlands. Up for discussion will be the difficult job land managers have today in protecting plant and animal life as well as people and property. Doing this well depends on detailed knowledge of the bush and local fire history which is often lacking. What do we know about this history, both Aboriginal and European? How can knowledge of fire and animal life help us to build a framework for a healthy and diverse local bush?

The second talk on the 8th September is by **Robin Ballinger,** which will follow on from her highly successful talk for Connecting Country last year. She aims to open our eyes to the ways in which early European arrivals occupied and used the local landscape, and assist us in recognising the still evident signs of squatters, miners, selectors and conservationists.

For more details or to RSVP contact Chris on 5472 1594
chris@connectingcountry.org.au

CFNC Website – Plants Update

Chris Timewell

Unfortunately, I have not had much opportunity to upgrade the website over the past couple of months. As much as possible I am continuing to keep the calendar of events, talks and excursions pages up-to-date. Please let me known if you have any suggestions, see any errors or have other feedback on the website. Any assistance with content or web management would also be welcomed.

Despite my recent lack of activity, Ern Perkins has been very busy updating the Castlemaine plant guide on the website. The most recent addition is a guide to the local daisies. I encourage all members with internet access to jump onto the website and try it out (http://home.vicnet.net.au/~cfnc/plants/plants.htm). The new guide covers a great range of native and exotic daisy species that you could find in your garden or out walking in the bush. I've found it very useful.

Bendigo Native Plant Group
A district group of the Australian Plant Society (Vic)

SPRING FLOWER SHOW

ROTARY GATEWAY PARK CENTRE
HIGH ST, Calder Highway), KANGAROO FLAT
(free off street parking, opposite APCO Service Station)
SATURDAY 3rd SEPTEMBER 2011, 9am to 5pm
and SUNDAY 4th SEPTEMBER, 10am to 4pm
Admission $4, children free
Display of Australian native plants including local indigenous species
Video of Australian plants which can be grown in the local region
Small display of Australian native plants as bonsai
Plant stalls by local nurseries, Book Stall, Raffle
Tea, coffee and biscuits available

Observations

- A Buff banded Rail in Forest Ck near the Wheeler st. bridge for 2 days -Chris Timewell
- At the meeting, Denis showed a cut section of a coppiced Red Gum that had regrown around the stump into a larger tree
- July 21 – Ten crested Pigeons on Burnett Rd., 200 m north of the Botanical gardens. July 22 – Pair of Scarlet Robins Weynton rd.: Denis Hurley
- Frog calls over the past 6 weeks or so have been loud and varied in Blakeley Road - Rita Mills
- Late reports -
- Denis Hurley: July 27; flowering plants seen on Escape Track on morning walk:

Nodding Greenhood	P nutans
Tall Greenhood	P aff longifolia (a lot less in some clumps compared to 2010 season – appear to have been grazed ?)
Common Hovea	Hovea linearis
Fairy Wax-flower	Philotheca verrucosa
Cats claws Grevillea	Grevillea alpina
Slender Rice-flower	Pimelia linifolia
Ploughshare Wattle	Acacia gunnii
Spreading Wattle	A. genistifolia
Golden Wattle	A. pycnantha
Purple coral Pea	Hardenbergia violacea
Lichen	Cladia sullivanii

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily those of the club

Castlemaine Field Naturalists Programme
August 2011

Fri August 12 meeting: speaker CRAIG GRABHAM on bats
Sat August 13 field trip: to be announced

Fri September 9 meeting: speaker MIKE WESTON – Shore birds
Sat September 10 field trip: Ararat ?

Fri October 14 meeting: speakers ANNE and NIGEL HARLAND
Galapagos and Ecuador

VISITORS ARE WELCOME AT CLUB ACTIVITIES

General meetings - (second Friday of each month, except January) are held in the Uniting Church (UCA) Hall (enter from Lyttleton St.) at 7.30 pm.
Field Trips - (Saturday following the general meeting) leave from the car park opposite Castle Motel, Duke Street at 1.30pm sharp unless stated otherwise. BYO morning and/or afternoon tea. Outdoor excursions are likely to be cancelled in extreme weather conditions. There are NO excursions on total fire ban days.
Business meetings - fourth Thursday of each month, except December, at Denis Hurley's; 20 Merrifield St., at 7.30 pm. All members are invited to attend.

Subscriptions for 2011
Ordinary membership: Single $27, Family $35
Pensioner or student: Single $24, Family $29
Subscription includes postage of the monthly newsletter, Castlemaine Naturalist

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